United Nations E/CN.3/2017/27

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
8 December 2016

Original: English

Statistical Commission
Forty-eighth session
7-10 March 2017
Item 4 (i) of the provisional agenda*
Items for information: agricultural and rural statistics

Report of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations on recent developments in agricultural and rural statistics

Note by the Secretary-General

In accordance with Economic and Social Council decision 2016/220 and past practices, the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit the report of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations on recent developments in agricultural and rural statistics. The report includes: (a) a brief report of the Global Strategy Steering Committee on the progress made in the implementation of the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics since the forty-sixth session of the Statistical Commission; (b) a summary of the work undertaken to date by the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Agricultural and Rural Statistics; and (c) a report on the preparation of the guidelines for the World Programme for the Census of Agriculture 2020.

The Commission is invited to take note of the report.

* E/CN.3/2017/1.

16-21762 (E) 191216

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Report of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations on recent developments in agricultural and rural statistics

I. Introduction

1. The present report is aimed at informing the Statistical Commission on the recent achievements in agricultural and rural statistics under the leadership of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and in partnership with key international and regional stakeholders. More specifically, the report describes the methodological development and capacity-building activities undertaken by FAO in various statistical domains. Important methodological improvements are being made, in particular, in the measurement of food consumption, agricultural productivity and sustainability and rural development. These developments will have important implications for the methods to be used for compiling many agriculture-related indicators of the Sustainable Development Goals. In addition, recommendations are being prepared to provide practical guidance to countries on the modalities for carrying out censuses of agriculture in the 2020 round. Regarding capacity-building activities, FAO, in close collaboration with various partners, has progressively put in place a number of initiatives that will help countries to meet both their basic data needs and the need for additional data to inform the indicator selected for monitoring the agriculture-related targets of the Sustainable Development Goals.

2. The report includes: (a) a brief report of the Global Strategy Steering Committee on the progress made in the implementation of the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics since the forty-sixth session of the Statistical Commission; (b) a summary of the work undertaken to date by the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Agricultural and Rural Statistics; and (c) a report on the preparation of the guidelines for the World Programme for the Census of Agriculture 2020.

II. Report of the Global Strategy Steering Committee: progress in the implementation of the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics

3. In this section, an update is provided on the progress made in the implementation of the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics. The report covers five topics: (a) an overall assessment of progress in 2015 and 2016; (b) the functioning of governance mechanisms; (c) the development of cost-effective methods; (d) the implementation of technical assistance and training; and (e) the way forward and priorities for 2017.

A. Overall assessment of progress in 2015 and 2016

4. The implementation of the Global Strategy made excellent progress in 2015 and 2016. Remarkable achievements have been accomplished in developing new

cost-effective methods and tools (50 technical reports and guidelines are available as of the end of 2016) and in the design and testing of the Agricultural Integrated Survey (AGRIS) methodology. At the country level, the regional implementing partners have supported 38 countries in establishing Strategic Plans for Agricultural and Rural Statistics. With regard to the provision of technical assistance at the country level, and in connection with the recommendations from the midterm evaluation, measures have been taken to accelerate the delivery of technical support to countries for the adoption of the cost-effective methodologies developed under the research programme. In this respect, the Africa and Asia-Pacific regions were requested to prepare accelerated plans to guarantee that countries will be exposed to the newest methodologies before the end of the implementation of the first phase of the Global Strategy.

B. Functioning of the governance mechanisms

5. The governance structures established to guide the implementation of the Global Strategy at the global and regional levels are in place. In terms of staffing, the Global Office and the Asia-Pacific regional office, hosted by the FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific in Bangkok, are adequately staffed. Lack of adequate resources at the level of other implementing partners has had repercussions in terms of the rate of delivery of the programme. Although some measures were taken to address this issue in the second half of 2016, the impact of these measures on the delivery of the planned activities will, it is hoped, be more tangible in 2017. In terms of coordination, the Global Office has convened quarterly coordination meetings with the various implementing partners aimed at better aligning the activities at the global and regional levels, as well the technical assistance and training activities. Significant efforts have been made to harmonize the training approaches of the Africa and Asia-Pacific regions. The new monitoring framework adopted after the recommendations of the midterm evaluation is now fully operational. In terms of communication, the Global Office, the Asia-Pacific regional office in Bangkok, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific (SIAP) have been very active in updating the dedicated websites and in regularly dispatching information notes to all stakeholders on the main achievements and results of the programme.

C. Development of cost-effective methods

6. Since the beginning of the implementation of the Global Strategy in 2013, efforts have been made by the Global Office to undertake a comprehensive research programme and prepare guidelines and training material that could be used for supporting the provision of technical assistance to countries and regional training institutions. By the end of 2016, 27 lines of research were completed and more than 50 technical reports and guidelines were disseminated through the Global Strategy website (www.gsars.org). At the end of 2015, following a decision taken by the Global Steering Committee and supported by funding from the Department for International Development of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, a new output was added to the research programme of the Global Office: the design and testing of AGRIS, a modular 10-year survey programme targeted at

collecting data from farms, designed as a cost-effective approach to agricultural data collection in developing countries that will help to build comprehensive rural information systems. The methodology will be finalized during the first quarter of 2017 and validated through large-scale field tests in Ghana before the end of 2017.

D. Technical assistance and training

7. Under the technical assistance component, the two regions implementing the Global Strategy have shown significant results in supporting countries in designing their Strategic Plans for Agricultural and Rural Statistics: overall, the African Development Bank (AfDB) has provided support to 24 countries and the FAO Regional Office for Asia-Pacific to 14 countries. To ensure the sustainability of the results by the end of the programme, donors have requested the implementing partners to place less emphasis on supporting Strategic Plans and dedicating more resources to ensure that countries will receive direct technical assistance on innovative cost-effective methodologies, such as the adoption of computer-assisted personal interviewing (CAPI) software for conducting agricultural surveys, measurement of the cost of production, measurement of post-harvest losses, estimation of livestock numbers and livestock products, compilation of food balances and establishment of master sampling frames to help design representative agricultural surveys. In Africa, an accelerated plan was prepared in 2016 and the Global Office was requested to support AfDB in providing technical assistance to African countries, in collaboration with a selected number of regional institutions (Afristat, the Southern African Development Community and the West African Economic and Monetary Union). In the Asia-Pacific region, an accelerated implementation plan for 2017 has also been developed.

8. Under the training component, insufficient staffing has prevented the complete delivery of the work programme in both regions. The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) has been instrumental, however, in preparing curricula and syllabi in advanced agricultural statistics methods in support of regional training institutions and in delivering regional short-term courses on master sampling frames. In addition, the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific has introduced in its curricula two workshops on the use of CAPI software for agricultural surveys and on the measurement of cost of production.

E. Way forward and priorities for 2017

9. The first phase of the Global Strategy is planned to be completed by the end of 2017. However, a no-cost extension of this first phase until the end of December 2018 is being discussed with donors in order to ensure the full implementation of the project's action plan and to significantly strengthen countries' capacity in agricultural statistics. This extension will also help the Global Office to complete the production of guidelines and training materials, particularly for the compilation of the agriculture-related indicators of the Sustainable Development Goals agreed upon by the Statistical Commission in March 2016. Finally, it will enable a new task force to be set up by the Global Strategy stakeholders at the beginning of 2017 to benefit from the lessons learned during the implementation of the first phase and

prepare recommendations on a possible second phase of the Global Strategy. Efforts will also continue to advocate and mobilize financial resources for implementation of the programme in the three regions of the Global Strategy (Latin America and the Caribbean, the Near East and Central Asia) which have not benefited from the Global Trust Fund of the Global Strategy.

III. Activities and achievements of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Agricultural and Rural Statistics

10. The forty-third session of the Statistical Commission endorsed the proposal to establish the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Agricultural and Rural Statistics with the following objectives: (a) to facilitate the development of new international statistical standards in the areas of food security, sustainable agriculture and rural development; (b) to facilitate the coordination and integration of statistics on food security, sustainable agriculture and rural development with related international statistical standards from other statistical domains; and (c) to advise the Global Office regarding the research programme of the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics.

A. Improving food consumption measurement

11. During the period 2015-2016, research activities were carried out on "improving methods for measuring food consumption". This work is being led by the World Bank, in close coordination with FAO and the Global Office of the Global Strategy. Activities to date have resulted in the preparation of a volume presenting new research from leading experts in the field, which is expected to be published in the first quarter of 2017.[1] Under the work programme, the Central Bureau of Statistics of Indonesia (Indonesia Badan Pusat Statistik) and the General Statics Office of Viet Nam conducted, with additional funding from the Global Strategy and technical assistance from the World Bank, two experiments using randomized surveys to test new methodologies. The experiments consisted of testing alternative survey methods and comparing them with a benchmark, by way of a randomized assignment to sampled households. The results of these studies will inform the design of national household surveys in both countries and will be published as research papers in academic journals. This body of analytical work is being consolidated into practical guidelines for survey design for endorsement by the members of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Agricultural and Rural Statistics. A first draft of the guidelines was discussed during an expert consultation held at FAO in November 2016, and a revised version will be submitted as a background document to the forty-eighth session of the Statistical Commission and presented at a side event. The final version of the guidelines is slated to be submitted for endorsement by the Commission at its forty-ninth session after a global written consultation has been conducted in 2017.

[1] The volume, provisionally entitled "Food counts: measuring food consumption and expenditures in Household Consumption and Expenditure Surveys", will be published as a special issue in the journal *Food Policy*.

B. Methods for measuring and monitoring agricultural sustainability

12. The research programme on "Methods for measuring and monitoring agricultural sustainability" was presented and discussed at a meeting of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Agricultural and Rural Statistics in March 2016. Taking into account the relevance of the development of an international collection of indicators, methods and procedures for measuring and monitoring agricultural sustainability, a new research thematic domain was inserted into the research component of the Global Strategy 2016 annual workplan. The research domain includes five components: (a) indicators and collection methods for gender-related data; (b) measuring youth employment and decent work in agriculture; (c) indicators and collection methods on agro-environment; (d) measuring agricultural productivity and efficiency; and (e) framework and methods for measuring and monitoring agricultural sustainability. All these research topics are under development, and guidelines will be finalized in 2017.

13. With the agreement reached by the Statistical Commission in March 2016 on the global Sustainable Development Goals indicator framework, the scope of the sustainability research lines were realigned accordingly to also support the Sustainable Development Goals process. Consequently, the scope of the fifth research topic, "Framework and methods for measuring and monitoring agricultural sustainability", was revised and reoriented to focus on the development of methodology and data collection solutions for Sustainable Development Goal indicator 2.4.1, "Proportion of agricultural area under productive and sustainable agriculture". The work is being conducted in close collaboration with FAO to contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals indicators under its custodianship. The methodological proposal on indicator 2.4.1 will be discussed and validated at an expert group meeting in February 2017 and submitted to the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators in the first half of 2017. In the second half of 2017, the methodological proposal and data-collection strategies will be field-tested in selected countries to assess their feasibility. The findings of the field tests will be incorporated into the methodological proposal and guidelines will be prepared, reviewed and finalized in 2017.

C. Improving rural statistics

14. Work on rural development has been under way since 2015. The research is aimed at providing a practical definition of rural areas that is nationally relevant and internationally comparable as well as a set of key indicators for measuring and tracking rural development. To leverage a global pool of knowledge and expertise, the research topic is being carried out in coordination with FAO, the United States Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the International Labour Organization, the World Bank, Eurostat, other international organizations, national statistical offices and independent experts. A literature review and working paper entitled "Conceptual framework and territorial definitions for improving rural statistics" and two technical reports on the social and environmental dimensions of rural indicators have been published in 2016. As from December 2016 (through the first quarter of 2017), work is proceeding on pilot-testing a definition of rural territory created by

combining the geographic information system environment data on global population density and size with land cover classes in a discrete typology in selected countries. The proposed approach to defining rural and urban areas will be submitted to the Statistical Commission through the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Agricultural and Rural Statistics in the first half of 2017. A definition of rural areas and a set of core indicators will be discussed at an expert group meeting, peer-reviewed, field-tested in selected countries and revalidated in the second half of 2017. The final definition and methodology for data collection will be reflected in guidelines and will be submitted for discussion to the Commission in 2018.

IV. World Programme for the Census of Agriculture 2020

15. Through its decennial programmes, FAO provides guidance and technical assistance to countries on the most advanced methods and best practices for conducting their national census of agriculture. Every 10 years, FAO reviews the countries' experiences in conducting censuses and lessons learned, and then prepares, publishes and disseminates the revised census guidelines with improved census methodology. The World Programme for the Census of Agriculture 2020 is the tenth round in the decennial programme of agricultural censuses to be conducted during the period 2016-2025. The decennial programme started in the 1930s, under the auspices of the International Institute of Agriculture, and has continued since the 1950s under the leadership of FAO.

16. Progress in the preparation of the World Programme for the Census of Agriculture 2020 was reported on and discussed at the forty-sixth session of the Statistical Commission held in 2015. The Programme consists of two volumes: volume 1, "Programme, concepts and definitions", which deals with the methodological and conceptual aspects of the census of agriculture; and volume 2, "Operational aspects", which deals with the practical steps involved in actually conducting an agricultural census. The Statistical Commission encouraged FAO to finalize the guidelines for the Programme and invited all countries to participate in the global consultation on volume 1.

17. In late 2015, FAO published volume 1 of the World Programme for the Census of Agriculture 2020.[2] The preparation of volume 1 was based on a review of experiences and lessons learned by countries in the 2010 census round and extensive consultations with national and international experts.

18. Volume 2 of the Programme, which is currently under preparation, provides comprehensive coverage of the main stages and practical aspects involved in the preparation and implementation of the census of agriculture. This is a revised and updated edition of the document entitled "Conducting agricultural censuses and surveys", published by FAO in 1995. As was the case with volume 1, volume 2 will undergo an extensive consultation process. A technical review meeting will be held in January 2017, with the participation of global, regional and country experts, to discuss the current draft of volume 2, which is submitted as a background document to the present session of the Statistical Commission.

[2] Available in all official languages of the United Nations at http://www.fao.org/world-census-agriculture/wca2020/en/.

19. As part of the activities to roll out the World Programme for the Census of Agriculture 2020, FAO has organized regional round tables to disseminate among FAO member countries the new recommendation contained in volume 1. These workshops are aimed at helping countries to gain a deeper understanding of the new approaches to and methodologies for data collection being advocated by FAO through the Programme. Such regional round tables were organized for countries in the Near East (2016), Africa (2016), Asia (2016) and Latin America (2016), and will be organized for countries in Central and Eastern Europe (2017) and the Caribbean (2017).

V. Conclusions

20. The Statistical Commission is invited to take note of: (a) the report of the Global Strategy Steering Committee; (b) the workplan of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Agricultural and Rural Statistics; and (c) the global consultation regarding volume 2 of the World Programme for the Census of Agriculture 2020.

United Nations E/CN.3/2017/28

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
14 December 2016

Original: English

Statistical Commission
Forty-eighth session
7-10 March 2017
Item 4 (j) of the provisional agenda*
Items for information: coordination of statistical programmes

Work of the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted in accordance with Economic and Social Council decision 2016/220 and past practices. It provides an overview of the work carried out by the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities in 2016 and summarizes the main conclusions of the Committee at its twenty-seventh and twenty-eighth sessions, held in New York on 7 March 2016 and in Paris on 29 and 30 September 2016, respectively. The Statistical Commission may wish to take into account the views of the Committee in its discussions under the relevant agenda items, and is invited to take note of the report.

* E/CN.3/2017/1.

16-22164 (E) 211216

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I. Introduction

1. The Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities held two sessions in 2016. The twenty-seventh session of the Committee was held in New York on 7 March 2016 prior to the forty-seventh session of the Statistical Commission, and the twenty-eighth session of the Committee, hosted by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), was held in Paris on 29 and 30 September 2016. Both meetings were chaired by the two Co-Chairs of the Committee: Martine Durand, Chief Statistician and Director, OECD Statistics Directorate, and Pietro Gennari, Chief Statistician and Director, Statistics Division of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. The present report provides an overview of the work carried out in 2016 and summarizes the main conclusions of the Committee at its twenty-seventh and twenty-eighth sessions.

II. Membership

2. The Committee currently has 45 members,[1] 40 of whom attended at least one session in 2016.

3. Given its increasing size and in order to maintain its effective functioning, the Committee is currently considering the possibility of revising its terms of reference concerning the criteria for membership, the establishment of a bureau that would support the Co-Chairs in organizing the work of the Committee between sessions, and its working modalities, in order to accommodate this increased membership.

III. Working methods

4. In addition to holding two annual sessions, the Committee operates actively between sessions through a network of task teams, following up on the decisions taken during the regular sessions. The teams choose their own working arrangements and hold their own meetings, if appropriate. They prepare documents on progress made and the results of their work and report to the Committee for decision-making at its regular sessions. As the secretariat of the Committee, the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat works closely with the Co-Chairs, facilitates communication among Committee members and prepares the reports of the regular sessions and the annual report to the Statistical Commission; it also maintains the web page of the Committee on the Division website.[2]

5. Since the forty-fourth session of the Statistical Commission, the Committee has developed joint statements on items in the agenda of the Commission that are important to the Committee. Such statements must receive strong support from Committee members in order to serve as a mandate for the Co-Chairs to speak on behalf of the Committee. The Co-Chairs delivered three joint statements at the

[1] See http://unstats.un.org/unsd/accsub-public/members.htm.

[2] http://unstats.un.org/unsd/accsub-public/workpartner_ccsa.htm.

forty-seventh session, in 2016.[1] The Committee is also planning to deliver joint statements at the forty-eighth session.

6. The Committee is developing a multi-year work programme and has conducted a survey on priority topics to be included in it. The Committee is committed to translating work areas and discussions into specific outputs (publications, papers and websites) in order to increase the impact and visibility of its work.

IV. Work of the Committee in 2016

A. 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

7. Issues surrounding the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development have been on the Committee's agenda at every session since its twentieth session, held in Frankfurt, Germany, during the fourth quarter of 2012.

8. The Committee receives regular briefings on the development of an indicator framework for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in view of the critical supporting role of international organizations in monitoring the implementation of the Agenda. The Committee established a task team, in collaboration with the Committee of the Chief Statisticians of the United Nations System, which will work on suggested guidelines and principles for the reporting and sharing of data on the Sustainable Development Goals.

9. The Committee also continued to stay informed about the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data, the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the United Nations World Data Forum, the Global Action Plan and the work being undertaken on the transformative agenda. Ten Committee members contributed to the global consultation for the Global Action Plan, which was conducted in November 2016.

B. Cost-benefit structures and communicating the value of international statistics

10. The Committee held a special session on the theme "Cost-benefit structures and the value of international statistics" at its twenty-eighth session, demonstrating not only considerable interest in the topic, but also that comparisons of costs and benefits were especially difficult to establish and could be politically sensitive. The Committee will integrate this topic into its multi-year programme and consider it again at a later session.

11. The Committee welcomed the initiative of the Statistics Division to provide an opportunity to discuss the contribution and respective roles of national and

[1] In 2016, joint statements were delivered under the following agenda items: 3 (a), "Data and indicators for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" (2 statements) and 3 (d), "Big data for official statistics".

international statistics to the global statistical system, from a statistical policy perspective, at the High-level Forum on Official Statistics held on 7 March 2016.

12. The Committee also decided to organize a session on that topic during the sixty-first World Statistics Congress, to be held in Marrakech, Morocco, from 16 to 21 July 2017.

C. Principles governing international statistical activities

13. The Committee endorsed the principles governing international statistical activities at its sixth session, held in September 2005, and reaffirmed them in a revised preamble at its twenty-third session, held on 3 March 2014.

14. The principles, which are inspired by the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, are accompanied by a list of good practices set out under each principle. These good practices are intended to aid organizations in the implementation of the principles. Over the course of 2015 and early 2016, a task team worked on creating a more comprehensive list of good practices that would enable members to better implement the principles. The work of the team was based largely on the results of a web-based survey conducted in May and June 2014 on the implementation of the principles (see E/CN.3/2015/29). The Committee adopted the new version of the good practices[4] at its twenty-seventh session, held on 7 March 2016.

D. Capacity-building and training centres

15. The Committee presents on its website materials and tools for strengthening training and human resources development among national and international statistical agencies. Information presented there is based on early initiatives aimed at the creation of a Committee training network.[5] The Committee also supports the establishment of a global network of regional training centres (see E/CN.3/2017/30).

E. Publications by the Committee

16. In 2016, the Committee published on its website the special issue paper entitled "Case studies: using non-official sources in international statistics",[6] which complements a paper entitled "Recommended practices on the use of non-official sources in international statistics",[7] published by the Committee in 2013. Other publications, as well as the Global Inventory of Statistical Standards, are available from the Committee's website hosted by the Statistics Division.[8]

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[4] See http://unstats.un.org/unsd/accsub-public/principles_stat_activities.htm.

[5] See http://unstats.un.org/unsd/accsub-public/ccsa_training/ccsa_training_resources.htm.

[6] Available from http://unstats.un.org/unsd/accsub/2016docs-28th/E-publication.pdf.

[7] Available from http://unstats.un.org/unsd/accsub-public/practices.pdf.

[8] http://unstats.un.org/unsd/accsub-public/workpartner_ccsa.htm.

F. Committee presence at international conferences

17. The special session, convened on 3 June 2016 on the theme "Quality of international statistics: statistics tailored to the international Sustainable Development Goals agenda: the challenges for international statistics at global, national and local levels", received positive feedback. All conference papers and presentations prepared for the event are available from the website of the Committee.[9]

18. The Committee decided to organize another session during the sixty-first World Statistics Congress (see para. 12 above).

G. 2017 sessions

19. The Committee agreed that its twenty-ninth session would be held in New York, on the morning of 6 March 2017, in conjunction with the forty-eighth session of the Statistical Commission. The thirtieth session will be held during the fourth quarter of 2017.

[9] http://unstats.un.org/unsd/accsub/2016docs-CDQIO/Programme.htm.

I. Background

1. The Committee of the Chief Statisticians of the United Nations System was formally established by the Commission in its decision 45/112, in which it also mandated the group of the United Nations chief statisticians to follow up on the recommendations of the Friends of the Chair for improved coordination and report back to the Commission.[1]

2. The chief statisticians of the United Nations system, who had been meeting informally twice a year since September 2007, constituted themselves in the new, more formal format and met officially for the first time on 10 September 2014, in conjunction with the twenty-fourth session of the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities, held in Rome.

3. The present document is the first report of the Committee of the Chief Statisticians of the United Nations System to the Statistical Commission. It summarizes the main activities and outputs of the Committee since its establishment.

II. Membership and working methods

4. The Committee comprises the statistical services of United Nations funds and programmes, United Nations specialized agencies and the United Nations Secretariat, as well as the regional economic and social commissions, the mandates of which include the provision of international official statistics in the context of the principles governing international statistical activities. A full list of current members is contained in annex I to the present report.

5. As a first step, the group developed formal terms of reference, which consisted of a mission statement and a description of key activities and functions and working modalities. The terms of reference were formally adopted by the Committee at its 5th session in the fall 2016 and can be found in annex II to the present report.

6. In addition to holding two annual sessions, the Committee works actively between sessions through task teams, following up on the decisions taken during the regular session. The task teams prepare documents on progress made and the results of their work and report to the Committee to enable decision-making at its regular sessions. As the secretariat of the Committee, the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat works closely with the Chair, facilitates communication among Committee members and prepares the reports on the regular sessions. It is also currently constructing a public webpage for the Committee, which will be hosted on the Division website.

7. The Committee operates in close collaboration with the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities, which convenes the international, regional and supranational organizations that are not part of the United Nations system, in order to address broader matters and issues regarding the entire global statistical system.

[1] See E/CN.3/2014/13.

III. Data and indicators for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

8. The Committee of the Chief Statisticians of the United Nations System, like the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities, receives regular briefings during its meetings on the development of an indicator framework for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular regarding the supporting role of international organizations, such as the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators and the High Level Group in the various processes.

9. The Committee contributed to the work on the selection of indicators for the global indicator framework by submitting a coordinated proposal for the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators to consider at its 2nd session, in October 2015. This coordination effort had the advantage of reducing the overall number of proposed indicators and improving metadata documentation, aspects which were appreciated by Group members.

10. The Committee initiated work on suggested guidelines and principles for data reporting and data sharing within the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The work is meant to clarify the modalities in which the data flows on SDG indicators between national statistical agencies and international organizations should be organized, in order to reduce the burden on reporting countries. The initiative is now being carried forward in collaboration with the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities, and a dedicated task team has been established with the objective of preparing a document to be discussed at the High Level Forum on Official Statistics, to be held the day before the start of the forty-eighth session of the Statistical Commission (see E/CN.3/2017/28, para. 8).

11. The Committee also continued to stay informed about the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data, the High-level Group for Partnership, Coordination and Capacity-Building for Statistics for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the planned United Nations World Data Forum, the Global Action Plan and the work being undertaken on the Transformative Agenda. Ten Committee members contributed to the global consultation for the Global Action Plan, which was conducted in November 2016.

IV. Generic United Nations statistical quality assurance framework

12. Achieving and maintaining public trust in official statistics requires that those statistics be produced in an objective, transparent and professionally independent manner. The Statistical Commission preserved these and other important principles in 1994 when it adopted a set of Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics. Many countries around the world have adopted a national code of practice and/or a statistical quality assurance framework to capture and implement the Principles, and to safeguard public trust. To support the development statistical quality assurance frameworks, the Statistics Division produced a generic national quality assurance framework, comprising a template and guidelines, that is designed to assist

countries in developing their particular frameworks. It has been endorsed by the Statistical Commission and is widely referenced.

13. For international organizations producing statistics, the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities in 2005 adopted the principles governing international statistical activities,[2] which enshrines principles similar to the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics (see paras. 16 and 17). In order to create a common understanding of the quality dimensions and quality assurance relevant for all United Nations entities, the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities, with the assistance of a consultant and a task team lead by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, drafted the United Nations Statistical Quality Assurance Framework, which will be available to the Commission in a background document. The Framework, which is the United Nations equivalent of national statistical quality assurance frameworks, presents a generic framework that can be adapted to the specific circumstances of an individual United Nations entity.

14. Several United Nations entities have already developed and implemented their own statistical quality assurance frameworks, in particular the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the International Telecommunication Union and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization. To facilitate the development and implementation of such frameworks by other United Nations entities, the United Nations Statistical Quality Assurance Framework includes a framework referred to as the generic statistical quality assurance framework. This framework is modelled on the national framework template and guidelines, but tailored to the circumstances of United Nations entities rather than national statistical organizations.

15. Overall, the United Nations Statistical Quality Assurance Framework is aimed at promoting a statistical quality culture across the United Nations statistical system and at providing material for establishing individual such frameworks in United Nations entities.

V. Principles governing international statistical activities

16. The Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities endorsed the principles governing international statistical activities in September 2005 and reaffirmed them in a revised preamble in March 2014. In 2016, the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities adopted the new version of the good practices.[3] All members of the Committee of the Chief Statisticians of the United Nations System have individually signed off on the principles governing international statistical activities and committed to their implementation. Among the initiatives undertaken to that end, members have published the principles on their website and have promoted awareness campaigns for the staff of their organization.

17. In the light of the importance of the principles for members, in particular in the context of data reporting and data sharing within the context of the follow-up to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the

[2] See http://unstats.un.org/unsd/accsub-public/principles_stat_activities.htm.
[3] See E/CN.3/2017/28, paras. 13-14.

Committee of the Chief Statisticians of the United Nations System decided to bring the principles to the attention of its principals. On the initiative of the Committee, the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, in its second regular session of 2015, noted the following:

> Data, especially data disaggregated by gender, age, race, disability and other dimensions, were crucial to delivering on the 2030 Agenda, including by facilitating effective localization and monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals. To ensure that the United Nations system took a consistent approach to producing high-quality statistics for analysis and decision-making, the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs urged the agencies to adhere to the principles governing international statistical activities to which the chief statisticians and principal coordinators of statistical activities within the system and in other international organizations had committed in 2005.[4]

VI. Other topics considered

18. Other topics discussed by the newly establish Committee over the past two years included the possible follow-up and implementation of the recommendations contained in the document entitled "Evaluation of the contribution of the United Nations development system to strengthening national capacities for statistical analysis and data collection to support the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and other internationally agreed development goals" (JIU/REP/2016/5).

VII. Future workplan

19. The Committee will continue to coordinate in all areas mentioned above. Special attention in future sessions will be given to the coordination of common capacity-building and technical assistance activities to support countries in meeting the new data requirements derived from the global monitoring framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Increased efforts will also be dedicated to promoting joint data collection activities and the sharing of statistics among its members, in order to reduce the burden on reporting countries. The Committee will undertake coordination in other areas as needed.

VIII. Conclusion

20. The Commission is invited to take note of the work of the Committee.

[4] CEB/2015/2, para. 86.

Annex I

List of members

Economic Commission for Africa

Economic Commission for Europe

Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

International Atomic Energy Agency

International Civil Aviation Organization

International Labour Organization

International Telecommunication Union

Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Statistics Division

United Nations Children's Fund

United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

United Nations Development Programme

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

United Nations Environment Programme

United Nations Human Settlements Programme

United Nations Industrial Development Organization

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

United Nations Population Division

United Nations Population Fund

Universal Postal Union

World Health Organization

World Tourism Organization

Annex II

Terms of reference of the Committee of the Chief Statisticians of the United Nations System

I. Background

1. The first meeting of United Nations entities on statistical programmes was held on 9 September 2007 in Madrid, on the margins of the tenth session of the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities. Since then, the group has met regularly twice a year, once in the spring on the occasion of the annual session of the Statistical Commission and once during the autumn on the occasion of the fall session of CCSA.

2. The Statistical Commission considered the coordination of statistical activities in the United Nations system during the 43rd, 44th and 45th sessions (see decisions 45/112, 44/112 and 43/112). In decision 45/112 the Commission "endorsed the proposal that the United Nations chief statisticians hold regular meetings, and mandated the group to follow up on the recommendations of the Friends of the Chair for improved coordination and report back to the Commission."

3. In accordance with the decision of the Commission, the Committee of the Chief Statisticians of the United Nations System was formally established on 10 September 2014. Since then, it has held regular meetings and reported on their outcomes to the Commission. This document describes the mission, key activities and working modalities of the Committee.

II. Mission statement

4. The Committee of the Chief Statisticians of the United Nations System promotes coherent and integrated system-wide United Nations actions to support statistics at the national, regional and international levels, following the principles governing international statistical activities, adopted by the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities in 2005, and the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, adopted by the General Assembly in 2015. Taking into account the comparative advantages of each member, the Committee encourages coordinated efforts by United Nations agencies and programmes in strengthening national statistical capacity through the definition of common approaches and joint interventions. The Committee supports in particular the modernization of national statistical systems and the reinforcement of their capacity to respond to new data demands for underpinning evidence-based policymaking, including the monitoring of global, regional and national development goals. Recognizing that national needs and priorities should guide the United Nations system's efforts to support national statistical systems, the Committee supports the development and full implementation of international statistical standards in member States for the production of high-quality and internationally comparable data.

5. The Committee promotes the coordination of the statistical programmes of the United Nations system entities with the aim of "delivering as one", by fostering

synergies, avoiding duplication and overlap, and facilitating data exchange. It promotes the adoption of common quality criteria to drive the statistical production of all agencies of the United Nations system and supports the sharing of knowledge and good practices. It also defines common United Nations positions on statistical matters, to be reported at the Statistical Commission or at other coordination bodies, such as the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities.

III. Key activities and functions

6. The Committee of the Chief Statisticians of the United Nations System establishes a network of statistical programmes in the United Nations system to enhance cooperation and coordination when helping Member States to improve their statistical capacity. The network also assists its members by defining solutions to common problems faced when managing or implementing regional or global statistical programmes.

7. The Committee promotes the use of harmonized international statistical standards and classifications and the implementation of the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics. It helps to promote accountability by improving the transparency of statistical practices globally.

8. The Committee defines and promotes the implementation of a common United Nations data quality framework to ensure that all United Nations agencies apply the same high level of transparency, accuracy, timeliness and efficiency when collecting, processing and disseminating statistics. It also adopts common policies to ensure national ownership of the data disseminated by United Nations agencies while maximizing their comparability and adherence to international standards.

9. The Committee discusses ways of coordinating activities at the national level through United Nations country teams and national programmes by sharing and promoting coherence and producing joint products.

10. The Committee promotes the coordination of common capacity-building and technical assistance activities by undertaking common actions on specific topics, at the national, regional and global levels, to meet more efficiently the demand for skilled statisticians and data analysts, for both Member States and international organizations.

11. The Committee promotes coordinated data compilation and exchange to reduce the burden on reporting countries by promoting joint data collection activities and the sharing of statistics and facilitating the use of modern platforms and mechanisms to provide countries with the best solutions and access to databases.

12. The Committee provides common positions and statements on statistical matters to the Statistical Commission in order to provide Member States with a single and coherent view from the United Nations.

13. The Committee enhances visibility and support to regional and global statistical activities within the United Nations system by promoting, among senior United Nations management personnel, the relevance of statistics and the ethical principles related thereto. This includes the involvement of the High-level

Committee on Programmes, the High-level Committee on Management and, through them, the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination. The Committee also promotes the coordination of national statistical systems through the various constituencies at the national and global levels.

14. The Committee discusses and contributes to the debates on international global frameworks and monitoring systems such as the Sustainable Development Goals and others in order to achieve a better division of work and ensure quality in statistical outcomes.

15. The Committee discusses emerging topics related to new technical challenges, new data sources and ways of disseminating data, and changes in United Nations donors' strategies in order to achieve better results and enhance the statistical activities carried out by the various agencies, organizations, funds and programmes.

16. The Committee promotes the cross-fertilization of innovative ideas and best practices on methodology, statistical sources and assistance to Member States. It also discusses administrative and substantive solutions to facilitate the mobility of statisticians across the United Nations system, and the implementation of joint actions in line with the rules and regulations of United Nations agencies.

IV. Working modalities

A. Membership and level of representation

17. The Committee comprises the statistical services of United Nations funds and programmes, specialized agencies and the Secretariat, as well as the regional economic and social commissions, the mandates of which include the provision of international official statistics in the context of the principles governing international statistical activities.

18. Prospective members should register with the secretariat.

19. Representation in meetings is expected to be at the level of director of an organization's statistical service or the equivalent.

B. Organization

20. The Committee elects a chairperson, who will serve for a two-year period and is eligible for re-election for a second two-year term. The chairperson may be identical to the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities co-chair representing the United Nations members of that Committee, to ensure close coordination with the activities of that Committee.

21. The functions of the chairperson are the following:

(a) To design the draft agenda with the support of the secretariat, on the basis of the decisions taken at the previous session and on subsequent requests by members;

(b) To chair the sessions of the Committee, including by preparing a summary of the discussion of each agenda item as a basis for the report of the

session; in the absence of the chairperson during a scheduled session of the Committee, the chair shall be temporarily assumed by another member;

(c) To propose draft minutes of the sessions, as prepared by the secretariat, to be approved by written procedure by all the members who attended the session;

(d) To represent the Committee in strategic meetings or discussions whenever its members consider it necessary;

(e) To invite, after consultation and in agreement with the members, observers to participate in the work of Committee.

22. The secretariat of the Committee is situated at the Statistics Division.

23. The functions of the secretariat are the following:

(a) To prepare the draft agenda in collaboration with the chairperson and following consultation with members;

(b) To ensure that all documentation is made available to its members in a timely fashion;

(c) To organize the sessions of the Committee and coordinate with the agreed host of a given session;

(d) To prepare draft minutes of each session in cooperation with the chairperson, to be approved by written procedure by all the members who attended the session;

(e) To create, host and keep up-to-date a protected website for the Committee;

(f) To prepare the draft report to the Statistical Commission for approval by the members.

C. Meetings, decisions, minutes and reporting

24. The Committee will meet twice a year. The first session will take place every spring in New York on the margins of the session of the Statistical Commission ("spring session"), and the second session will place on the margins of the autumn session of the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities ("fall session"), at the venue chosen for that session. The exact timing and length of the sessions will be decided by the chairperson, in consultation with the members, upon proposal of the secretariat. The draft agenda is prepared by the chairperson, with assistance provided by the secretariat and in consultation with members, on the basis of decisions taken at the previous session and subsequent requests by members.

25. The coordination of activities between sessions, for example, through electronic discussion groups, is an important and integral part of the work of the Committee.

26. Consensus during sessions is determined by the chairperson and reported in the minutes of the session. A report on decisions and actions is prepared, in a timely

manner, for adoption after each session by the secretariat. The report specifies the lead agencies responsible for any action or follow-up.

27. The Committee reports at least every two years to the Statistical Commission. Such reports are drafted by the secretariat, under the guidance of the chairperson, and approved by the members.